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Blood shortage heats up with summer

LANSING – State Sen. Michelle McManus, R-Lake Leelanau, has received word that the Michigan Red Cross sees no end to the prolonged blood shortage that has threatened the availability of blood products to sick and injured people in the state's hospitals.

“The Red Cross anticipates blood donations will drop significantly during the summer – especially around the holidays,” McManus said. “Conversely, the demand for blood increases during the summer because of travel-related accidents or activities.”

The Red Cross has seen a 10 to 15 percent decline in donations for more than a year. To help offset the further effects of a seasonal dip in donations, the Red Cross is encouraging new and repeat donors to give blood once or twice this summer.

“We’re calling it our All-American Summer,” said Fred Sterns, CEO of the Michigan Red Cross. “We’ll have up to 20 blood drives each weekday, and some on weekends through September.”

The push for summer blood donations will culminate on Sept. 11 with the biggest single-day blood drive in the state at the Michigan International Speedway. Now in its third year, the Spirit of America 400 was the biggest blood drive in the nation its first year, and the second largest last year.

“Wherever you are in the state this summer, whether you’re traveling or staying close to home, you’re sure to find a blood drive close by,” Sterns said.

Patients in Michigan hospitals need about 2,000 blood products each day for medical treatments related to cancer, surgeries, and other serious illnesses.

Blood donors must be at least 17, weigh at least 100 pounds and be in good general health. The process of giving blood takes about an hour and can help save up to three lives.

To learn more about blood drives in your area, call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE, or visit www.senate.michigan.gov/mcmanus for a list of blood drives in the 35th District.

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